

Justin Bledin
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Friday 10:00-12:30

Yitzhak. Y. Melamed
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Class Location: Gilman 288

150.487 Fundamental Principles of Philosophical Rationalism(Spring 2017) SYLLABUS

I. Course Description:

At the center of Leibniz rationalist metaphysics are four interrelated philosophical principles: (1) The Law of Non-Contradiction, (2) The Principle of Sufficient Reason (roughly, the claim that everything must have a reason), (3) The Identity of Indiscernibles (roughly, the claim that there are no two perfectly similar things), and (4) The Predicate in Subject Principle (the claim that in every true proposition the concept of the predicate is somehow contained in the concept of the subject). In this class, we will study these four principles, i.e., their modal strength, range, justification, and interrelations both in early modern philosophy (Leibniz, Spinoza, and Clarke), and in contemporary philosophy (Della Rocca, Hawley, Sam Levey, Dasgupta, Max Black).

II. Required Texts:

1. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, translated by Ariew and Garber [=AG], Hackett. ISBN 0-87220-062-0.
2. Rodriguez-Pereyra, *Leibniz's Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles*. Oxford UP 2014.
3. Secondary literature distributed in class.

Recommended Secondary Literature:

Carraud, Vincent, *Causa sive Ratio: la Raison de la Cause, de Suarez à Leibniz*. Paris: PUF, 2002.

Adams, Robert M., *Leibniz: Determinist, Idealist, Theist*. Oxford; Oxford UP, 1994.

III. Course Requirements:

1. Term paper (about 20 pages long), due at the end of the semester (70% of grade).
2. Discussion with us about your paper topic (0% but mandatory).
3. Active participation in the seminar, including weekly email of research questions (10% of grade).
4. Presentation in class (20% of grade).

IV. Office Hours:

Justin: Fri. 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

Yitzhak: Mon. 11:30-12:30 and by appointment.

V. Rescheduled class: Class on **March 16th** will be rescheduled.

VI. Tentative Order of Topics and Readings

Unit 1: Introduction

- Melamed, Yitzhak Y. and Lin, Martin, "Principle of Sufficient Reason", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/sufficient-reason/>.
- Forrest, Peter, "The Identity of Indiscernibles", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/identity-indiscernible/>.

Unit 2: Spinoza, the PSR, and PII

- Della Rocca, Michael, *Spinoza* (Routledge 2008), 1-88
- Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I (till proposition 11)

Unit 3: Leibniz I

- Jauering, Anja, "The Modal Strength of Leibniz's PII."
- Rodriguez-Pereyra, *Leibniz's PII*. Chs. 1-2.

Unit 4: Leibniz II

- Rodriguez-Pereyra, *Leibniz's PII*. Chs. 3-6.
- Leibniz, "Primary Truths" (AG 30-34); *Discourse on Metaphysics* (AG35-68).

Unit 5: Leibniz III

- Rodriguez-Pereyra, *Leibniz's PII*. Chs. 7-9
- Leibniz's letters to Clarke (AG 320-346)

Unit 6: Leibniz IV

- Rodriguez-Pereyra, *Leibniz's PII*. Chs. 10-12.
- Leibniz, "On Nature Itself" (AG 155-166)

Unit 7: Leibniz V

, *Leibniz's PII*. Chs. 13-15.

- Rodriguez-Pereyra, forthcoming, "The Principles of Contradiction, Sufficient Reason, and Identity of Indiscernibles", in Maria Rosa Antognazza (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Leibniz*,

Unit 8: Contemporary Discussions of PII

- Black, Max, "The Identity of Indiscernibles" *Mind* (1952).
- Adams, Robert M., "Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity" *Journal of Philosophy* (1979).

Unit 9: Contemporary Discussions of PII

- Della Rocca, Michael, "Two Spheres, Twenty Spheres, and the Identity of Indiscernibles" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* (2005).
- Hawley, Katherine. "Identity and Indiscernibility", *Mind* 118 (2009): 101-9.

Unit 10: Contemporary Discussions of PSR

- Della Rocca, Michael, 2010, "PSR", *Philosophers' Imprint*, 10(7)
- Della Rocca, Michael, "Primitive Persistence and the Impasse between Three-Dimensionalism and Four-Dimensionalism" *Journal of Philosophy* 108 (2011).

Unit 11: Contemporary Discussions of PSR

- Dasgupta, Shamik, "Metaphysical Rationalism", *Noûs*, 50 (2016): 379–418
- Bliss, Ricki and Trogon, Kelly, "Metaphysical Grounding", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/grounding/>.
- Fine, Kit, "A Guide to Ground" in Correia and Schnieder 2012: 37–80.

Unit 12: Contemporary Discussions of PSR

- Levy, Samuel. "The Paradox of Sufficient Reason" *Philosophical Review* 125 (2016): 397-430

Academic Integrity

Please do not cheat. This would be depressing. Cheating hurts the Johns Hopkins community by undermining academic integrity, creating mistrust, and fostering unfair competition. Students caught cheating may receive an F in the course and can face direr consequences in extreme cases.

You can find more information here:

<http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergrad-students/student-life-policies/#UAEB>.

Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability or believe that you might have a disability that requires special accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services to obtain a letter from a specialist: studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu. Then pass on the letter to me.